A JOURNEY TO EASTER

LENTEN MEDITATION WEEK 2

Reflections and linked quotations derived from 'An Ocean of Grace' by Tim Chester (©The Good Book Co.)

The Light of Love

God loved us before he made us; and his love has never diminished and never shall.
(Julian of Norwich)

HYMN

Such Love, pure as the whitest snow;
such love weeps for the shame I know;
such love, paying the debts I owe;
O Jesus, such love.

Such love, stilling my restlessness;
such love, filling my emptiness;
such love, showing me holiness;
O Jesus, such love.

Such love springs from eternity;
such love, streaming through history;
such love, fountain of life to me;
O Jesus, such love.

Graham Kendrick

CONFESSION

O Lord, who loves us as a father, who cares for us as a mother, who came to share our life as a brother, we confess before you our failure to live as your children, brothers and sisters bound together in love.
(World Council of Churches)

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. ***Amen*** *(*Common Worship)

READINGS and REFLECTIONS

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

When the Son of God became man, he accepted all the limitations of human life. He didn't stop being God, but he didn't use his divine power to lessen the experience of being human – he used that power only to bless others through feeding the hungry, healing the sick, raising the dead. His love is revealed in who he endured the cross for: it's easy to love the lovely, but Jesus was prepared to die for his enemies.

Your love was fervent. "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10) Your love is the supreme example of love: the fire that should kindle all our sparks. Oh, what love was this!
Your mercy was abundant. You took on yourself all our miseries and debts, and made satisfaction for them all, caring not what you suffered, enacting our redemption in your own person. We undervalue your mercy, who overvalued us: we will not sell all to buy you, but you sold all you had and gave your very self to buy us. Oh, what mercy is this!
Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

The Lord will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah3:17)

What a wonderful thought! The infinite love of God is seen most clearly at the cross, but, says the 18th century theologian Anne Dutton, this isn't the end of Christ's love for us: he not only rescues us from sin, he delights in us, rejoices in us – he sings his love to us. He embraces us in our ugliness and beautifies us through his grace, and his love is embodied in bread and wine.

Oh infinite patience, a patience that flows from, is maintained by, and resolved into an infinity of love! This is ten thousand times more than we deserve! It is grace that none could show but the God of all grace: higher than the heaven, deeper than the sea, broader than the earth, longer than time, long and boundless as eternity!
Anne Dutton (1692-1765)

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
(Ephesians 3: 17-19)

Paul prays that his readers might know something of a love which 'surpasses knowledge' – technically something unknowable! It's impossible to grasp the full depth of Christ's love, but we need to see more and more of it; each time we do wrong, or suffer, or face temptation; that love is there, to lift us up.

Your love, O Christ, in its sweetness, its fullness, its greatness, its faithfulness, surpasses all human comprehension. Where shall language be found which shall describe your matchless love, your unparalleled love, towards the children of men? All descriptive words merely touch the surface of your love, while depths immeasurable lie beneath.
Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

PRAYERS

O God of love, we ask you to give us love; love in our thinking, love in our speaking, love in our doing, and love in the hidden places of our souls; love of those with whom we find it hard to bear, and love of those who find it hard to bear with us; love of those with whom we work, and love of those with whom we take our ease; that so at length we may be worthy to dwell with you: eternal love.
(William Temple)

We pray for the church, asking for its world-wide community to be united in its love for you and for all people.
Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world, thinking of areas where fear, poverty, hunger and disease make life difficult or dangerous.
Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the sick in body, mind or spirit, thinking of all whom we know to be in need of your healing love……..
Lord, in your mercy**, Hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, and for all those whom we love……..
Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

As the days lengthen and the earth spends longer in the light of day, grant that we may spend longer in the light of your presence, O Lord, and may the seeds of your Word, long-buried within us, grow, like everything around us, into love for you, and love for all people, so that this Lent there may be a springtime for our lives in Christ. **Amen** *(Dick Williams)*

We say the **LORD'S PRAYER** (in traditional language)

Lord it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee and adore,
Oh for grace to love thee more!
(William Cowper)

We share **THE GRACE**